# Press release

PRINTABLE VERSION

## Data-gathering floats to assist in detection of climate change

23 April 2002

The Met Office and Southampton Oceanographic Centre are currently deploying 25 Argo data-gathering floats in the Southern Indian Ocean, which will assist in the early detection of climate change.

Climate simulations made by the Met Office's Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research have suggested that changes in the salinity (saltiness) of the intermediate waters in the Southern Indian Ocean are a signal of man-made climate change. The Argo floats, which gather information on the temperature and salinity of the upper 2,000 metres of an ocean, will help to monitor climate change in the ocean and provide better long term weather forecasts for areas of the world that are vulnerable to floods and droughts.

Each Argo float will drift at a depth of about 2,000 metres. Every ten days, the float is programmed to rise back to the surface, measuring the temperature and salinity. Once the float reaches the surface, it relays its position and measurements to an orbiting satellite. The data is then relayed to meteorological and oceanographic centres worldwide.

The deployment of the floats is part of the international Argo project, which is endorsed by the World Meteorological Organization and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, and expects to have approximately 3,000 floats deployed globally by 2006.

Jon Turton, UK Argo programme manager at the Met Office, said: "It is exciting to see how the Argo project is progressing towards establishing a global array of profiling floats, particularly as the concept of free drifting floats was developed in the UK in the 1950s. The data gathered from the floats will improve the accuracy and detail of oceanographic information, which will become a vital tool for oceanographers and meteorologists."

Notes

The Met Office and Southampton Oceanographic Centre are deploying 25 Argo floats along the 32° S line from South Africa to Australia from the NERC research vessel RRS Charles Darwin.

The UK has now deployed over 50 floats in support of Argo in a number of different geographical areas: the North Atlantic, Arctic Ocean, Indian Ocean and the Southern Ocean.

The Met Office is responsible for the management and co-ordination of the UK contribution to Argo, with support from Southampton Oceanography Centre, the British Oceanographic Data Centre and the UK Hydrographic Office. Funding for the UK contribution to Argo is being provided by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

Since its inception in 1999 14 nations: Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Spain, Russia, UK and USA, and the European Commission have committed support for the Argo project.

Argo floats may be referred to as Array for Realtime Geostrophic Oceanographic floats

More about Argo

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